

get the 411 on massage therapists

Jessica's Story

My friend told me about this job—massage therapist. It doesn't take a lot of schooling and you can work for yourself. Even better, you can get a great job on a cruise ship. Sounds like my kind of job. So, last Career Day, I decided to check it out. Here's what I learned:

What Do Massage Therapists Do?

Massage therapists work to improve the circulation of blood through the body and increase the flexibility of muscles, ligaments and other soft tissues. Some people visit a massage therapist to warm up before a sporting event or to relieve a specific pain. Others want to relax and reduce stress. Typically, a therapist will start every session with an intake interview to discover the client's needs and wants. Then, they determine and provide the appropriate massage.

Massage Therapy is Physically Demanding

Along with extended periods of standing, massage technique requires therapists to use some of their muscles repeatedly. This repetitive motion can cause injuries to wrists and hands.

Where Do They Work?

Massage therapists practice in health clubs, resorts, chiropractic offices, cruise ships, their homes, or other convenient places.

What Kind of Preparation Do They Need?

Most states (including Utah) require massage therapists to be licensed. To obtain a license in Utah, you must graduate from an accredited school of massage therapy.

You must have a minimum of 600 hours of classroom and clinical training. You must pass two examinations (including a national certification exam). Certain criminal convictions (such as sex offenses) may disqualify applicants from receiving a license.

What About Wages?

Almost half of all massage therapists work part-time. Nationally, those who work at least six hours a week make between \$20,000 and \$29,000 a year. In Utah, a typical massage therapist who works for an employer makes about \$11.50 an hour. However, wages vary based on employer, skill, and experience. Many massage therapists are self-employed and receive payment based on how many massages they give. They must pay for their own equipment, continuing education, liability insurance, and health insurance. They usually have transportation costs and office rental expenses as well.

Other Things to Consider

Massage therapy can be considered a "helping" profession. Many massage therapists chose this profession because they receive a sense of satisfaction by making people feel better.

There are almost 5,000 people in Utah who are licensed as massage therapists. However, the Department of Workforce Services estimates that fewer than 1,500 people actually work as massage therapists. There are expected to be roughly 70 openings per year for massage therapists in Utah in the next few years.

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